

Council on Postsecondary Education
May 22, 2006

P-16 Council Update

At its March 29 meeting, the P-16 Council continued to address its priority policy areas: developing a more rigorous high school curriculum, developing research-based policies for high school-college dual enrollment, providing an adequate supply of qualified educators, creating an integrated P-16 data system, and ensuring that students have affordable access to quality education through college.

P-16 Council Chair Dorie Combs noted the special section in the March 8 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* devoted to school and college, in which Kentucky's State P-16 Council was one of three P-16 councils highlighted. Kentucky also was referenced for its Statewide Postsecondary Placement Policy.

Education Cabinet Secretary Virginia Fox commended both the work and the impact of Kentucky's P-16 Council, noting that several pieces of legislation called on the key partners—the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Kentucky Department of Education, and the Education Professional Standards Board—to implement various agendas together. She noted that this legislation would not have been developed without the P-16 Council.

Gene Bottoms, executive director of the Southern Regional Education Board's *High Schools That Work* initiative, reviewed SREB's report for Kentucky, "Building Transitions from High School to College and Careers for Kentucky's Youth." The report discussed findings of a March 2005 forum that convened 28 Kentucky education and policy leaders to discuss strategies to improve students' transitions from high school to postsecondary education. Over the past decade, Kentucky students' preparedness has improved, more students are taking the ACT, and more are enrolled in advanced placement and distance learning courses. The report also noted the increased use of employer-based credential assessments at both the high school and postsecondary levels. It commended the state's strong GEAR UP program, the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship program, and the agreement among Kentucky's public postsecondary institutions on college-readiness standards in English and mathematics as a result of Kentucky's participation in the American Diploma Project.

Challenges remain, however, and the report recommended increased accountability for persistence and degree completion at both two- and four-year institutions; implementation of successful programs for retaining students, including programs targeting the needs of first-generation and nontraditional students; and improved developmental education courses. Dr. Bottoms noted that mathematics remains a challenge at both the high school and the postsecondary levels. He also emphasized the importance of impressing on students, teachers, and parents the level of preparation needed for college and career readiness.

Several recommendations in the SREB report had been approved (though not yet implemented) by the time of its presentation at the P-16 Council:

- Requiring a rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum for all students, developing a system of early diagnostic assessment.
- Using employer-based multi-state certification exams as part of the state's accountability system.
- Establishing standards for dual credit and dual enrollment courses.

The P-16 Council reviewed the revised high school graduation standards approved by the Kentucky Board of Education to go into effect for the class of 2012. Among the most significant changes is the addition of algebra II as a required mathematics course and the requirement that students take mathematics each year in high school. The Council discussed the responsibility of the postsecondary sector in producing the mathematics teachers to meet this requirement. Staff from local school districts showed examples of how student learning plans could be tailored to meet a variety of career aspirations while meeting more rigorous curricular standards.

CPE and KDE staff provided an update on the 2002 High School Feedback Report, scheduled to be released during the week of May 15 (see the agenda item beginning on page 40). The 2002 report was modified with input from KDE and from several superintendents. It provides information about the performance of Kentucky high school graduates who enroll in Kentucky postsecondary institutions. Increasing communication between the K-12 and postsecondary sectors, particularly with respect to high school curriculum and instruction and postsecondary enrollment and performance, will allow administrators in both sectors to modify their programs and practices to improve student success. The report also highlights the need for a unified P-16 data system to monitor student performance across multiple educational sectors.

Staff from the CPE, the KDE, and the EPSB reported on logistical and policy issues that need to be addressed for an integrated, cross-agency P-16 data system to be established and effective. These include creating a forum for ensuring the compatibility of separate agency data systems as they are designed and developed; agreements for owning, warehousing, maintaining, and sharing data across the partner agencies; developing software protocols that will be compatible across systems; and the critical issues of developing student identifiers that can be used across systems while ensuring student privacy and confidentiality. These challenges are gradually being met within each sector, as well as across them. The P-16 Council also asked the staff of the partner agencies to resume the development of a focused set of P-16 indicators of progress that will both reflect and integrate the agenda of the partner agencies.

The P-16 Council heard a report on Kentucky's GEAR UP program (presented at the CPE March meeting). The program is awaiting finalization of the federal budget. If the most recent version is passed, the current six-year GEAR UP grant will extend for two years.

Three local P-16 council initiatives were awarded start-up or continuation funding, thus obligating the remaining available funds for the 2006 fiscal year. Funding allocated in the joint budget proposal was not included in the 2006-08 budget. P-16 Council members discussed the need to secure support for staffing and sustaining this important mechanism for implementing the state P-16 agenda.

P-16 Council members heard results of a dual enrollment study and a survey conducted by CPE, as well as a task force convened by the KDE. In 2001, the CPE removed state-level restrictions on dual credit and allowed individual institutions and school districts to set their own articulation agreements. Dual enrollment in Kentucky has nearly doubled from 9,321 in 2001-02 to 18,291 in 2004-05. The study focused on the class of 2002. Preliminary results show that the Kentucky Community and Technical College System is the largest provider of dual enrollment courses to high school students and that technical and occupational courses constitute the most common type of course taken by dually enrolled high school students. The study showed, however, that academic courses correlated more positively with subsequent college enrollment than did other types of courses. The survey indicated that postsecondary institutions are challenged to find interested, available instructors for dual enrollment courses. Institutions also would welcome state-level policy direction regarding tuition and aid. The KCTCS institutions especially identified the absence of statewide standards for dual credit courses as a challenge. The CPE and KDE staff will determine how dual enrollment and dual credit opportunities should play a role in the Commonwealth's college-going strategies and what policies should be developed at the state level.

P-16 Council members received an update on the State Educational Leadership Redesign Initiative, a collaborative effort to redesign the preparation program for school principals. Recommendations will be presented to EPSB later this year.

Several pieces of legislation were reported just as the General Assembly was concluding. Perhaps the most significant bill that passed the Senate unanimously at the time of the Council meeting but did not pass the House until the last day of the session was Senate Bill 130, which requires all students to take the ACT in grade 11 and provides an option to take selected WorkKeys assessments. This, in combination with the recently revised P-12 assessment systems, will implement the entire Educational Planning and Assessment System in Kentucky, enable the KDE to collect student-level performance data, and make Kentucky the first state to fully align statewide assessment from middle school to college placement and the skilled workplace.